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**Biblical History**  
**in the Light of**  
**Archæological Discovery**  
**since A.D. 1900.**

*By*

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*Being the Gunning Prize Essay read  
before the Victoria Institute at the  
Meeting held in London on  
February 11th, 1935.*



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## Biblical History in the Light of Archæological Discovery since A.D. 1900.

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*(Being the Gunning Prize Essay, 1934.)*

IN the early part of this year there passed to his rest and reward the world-renowned scholar and archæologist, Professor A. H. Sayce, to whom Bible students are so deeply indebted. A few years before his death Sayce published an interesting volume of *Reminiscences*. On p. 213 he tells the story of an early disappointment and its result. Dr. Pusey, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, died in September, 1882. Sayce anticipated that the vacant chair would become his, since Pusey had assumed that he would be his successor.

The appointment lay with Mr. Gladstone, and Sayce was one of his personal friends. But Gladstone refused to appoint him, considering him "unsafe," as Sayce was then regarded as one of the leaders of German critical theology in the University. Dr. Driver was appointed instead. With what result? Driver remained in a professorial armchair to write critical books, while Sayce went out to the Near East to dig. Like Sir William M. Ramsay, the concrete facts of archaeology transformed his thinking, and drove him backwards towards the traditional position. To quote his own words: "I myself had now come (in 1898) to be regarded as a representative of the so-called 'Orthodox' party and a defender of Holy Writ. It was in vain that I protested against being classed as a theologian, and explained that I dealt with the Old Testament simply as an archaeologist. Just as the archaeological discoveries in the Mediterranean had given a death-blow to the 'critical' theories about Homer and the early traditions of Greece, so similar discoveries were now giving the same death-blow to the theories about the Old Testament and its contents which had been imported from Germany. Subjective fantasies must make way for the solid facts of science which were at last being recovered. . . . With hardly an exception the archaeological discoveries of the last thirty-five years in the Nearer East have been dead against the conclusions of the self-appointed critic and on the side of ancient tradition."

The discoveries here referred to by Sayce, made toward the close of the nineteenth century, proved indeed to be but a kind of first-fruits of a bountiful harvest to be reaped in the beginning of the twentieth century. Within the compass of a short essay it is not easy to deal adequately with the wealth of the material available. I propose, therefore, to confine my attention to what might be described as the mountain-peaks of the Biblical history, the historic integrity of which has been assailed by rationalistic criticism, but is now vindicated by archaeological research. They may be thus summarized: (i) The Cradle of Civilization and Religion; (ii) The Genesis Story of the Flood; (iii) Abraham and the Patriarchal Records; (iv) The Destruction of the Cities of the Plain; (v) The Conquest of Jericho; (vi) The Date of the Exodus; (vii) The Antiquity and Authenticity of the Pentateuch; (viii) The Book of Daniel; (ix) Gezer, Gaza, and Jerusalem; (x) The New Testament: Language and History.

## I.—THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION AND RELIGION.

The first thirty years of the twentieth century have proved to be a period of revolutionary ideas, especially in that which concerns the origin of Civilization and Religion. The change is principally due to the remarkable series of archaeological discoveries which marked the opening of the century, and which have been particularly abundant since the termination of the War in 1918, and the opening of Mesopotamia to the work of the excavator. The changes which stand out most conspicuously might be thus summarized :

(1) *The Art of Writing*.—Critics used to assume that the art of writing was not generally practised until about the eighth century, B.C. Upon this foundation was based the assumption that the Genesis records of the Bible could be dismissed as mythical or legendary, and that the Pentateuchal narratives in general could not be regarded as historically trustworthy, through lack of a medium other than oral tradition by means of which they could be transmitted. The discovery of the Tel el-Amarna Tablets, in 1888, came as a rude awakening through their revelation of the existence of official correspondence between Egypt and Syria six centuries earlier; but there was more to follow. The discovery of the Code of Hammurabi revealed the fact that not only was writing practised two thousand years B.C., but that it was so extensively known that a Babylonian official proclamation, containing the laws and statutes of the realm, could be publicly exhibited for the people generally to read. Further, the excavations on the site of Ur of the Chaldees by Dr. Leonard Woolley, during the past ten years, have demonstrated that the art of writing goes back nearly four thousand years, B.C.

(2) *The Original Home of Civilization*.—These discoveries on the site of Ur of the Chaldees, together with those under the superintendence of Professor Langdon in the neighbourhood of Kish, near the site of ancient Babylon, have been revolutionary in that they have confirmed the growing belief that not Egypt, as historians once supposed, but Babylonia was the original home of civilization, where in fact the Bible precisely locates it. Previous calculations and suppositions have been rudely shaken. To give one simple illustration which should be of interest in this age of unprecedented locomotion. According to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, "Before fifteen hundred B.C., chariots

and horses were unknown in Egypt." According to the *Cambridge Ancient History*, the chariot first appeared about two thousand B.C. But, as recently as January, 1928, the Americans discovered at Kish two chariot wheels, pre-Sumerian, i.e. of actually 3200 B.C. or earlier. They are wooden discs two feet in diameter, with rims two inches deep, and studded with copper nails on the outer surface. The width between the wheels is 4 ft. 6 in. They were found in two tombs—complete four and two-wheeled chariots, with the bodies of four wheels and one platform perfect.\*

During the past few years Sir Flinders Petrie has been excavating on the site of Old Gaza. Houses of three storeys high, with stuccoed floors, and large square hearths for fires, have been unearthed, together with ancient palaces going back as far as 3000 B.C., containing bathrooms 12 ft. by 8 ft., with underground stone drains. Two subterranean passages, each 500 ft. long, have also been found. The death-pits in the Royal Cemetery of Ur have provided most exquisite examples of artistic skill, dated as early as 3500 B.C. The school-boy of my youth was taught that the arch in architecture was introduced by the Romans. But in Ur of the Chaldees the so-called Roman arch can be seen *in situ* in buildings erected fifteen centuries before the foundations of Rome were laid. Law and literature, manufactures and commerce, domestic and temple architecture in burnt brick, artistry in silver and gold, in cornelian and lapis lazuli, pottery and mosaic and glaze, wheeled transport and stringed instruments of music—all these and more tokens of high culture and advanced civilization have been revealed amid the ruins of the city of Abraham's birth and upbringing. According to Professor Sayce, so early as seventeen hundred and fifty years before Abraham, "there was an excellent postal service connecting Canaan with Babylonia which went back to the days of Naram-Sin, and some of the clay *bullæ* which served as stamps for the official correspondence at that period are now in the Museum of the Louvre."†

One undoubted result of all this has been a growing tendency to treat the early narratives of Genesis with much more respect than was common towards the end of last century. Even the

\* *The Evangelical Quarterly*, April, 1931.

† *The Archaeology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, p. 143.

story of the Tower of Babel and the consequent dispersion of the race has been illustrated in recent excavations. Archæology has revealed the fact that every important city of ancient Mesopotamia possessed a staged tower or *Ziggurat*. That in Ur of the Chaldees appears to be the best preserved. One which was discovered in 1932 is thus described by Dr. Leonard Woolley: "The other site excavated is the terrace platform of the *Ziggurat*, where we have been digging down to the deeper levels in order to trace the history of the predecessors of the great tower built by Ur-Engur in 2300 B.C. Already we have one series of buildings dating to about 3000 B.C., and a very massive complex of walls and chambers which may well go back nearly a thousand years before that date. It is evident that the present *Ziggurat* is at least the third to occupy the same site."\*

The tower was in part a temple, in part a beacon and rallying centre. But the declared purpose of the builders was directly opposed to the explicitly revealed will of God. Decentralization was the divine plan for mankind. God's original command, as recorded in Gen. i, 28, was: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." Congestion and moral contagion are inseparable. Through the wise Providence of God the race of mankind was distributed geographically and confused linguistically. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. xi, 8-9).

"Of the first dispersion of the human race over the surface of the earth," writes Dr. Melvin G. Kyle, "we know almost absolutely nothing aside from the statements of the Bible . . . The second dispersion, however, is being exactly, and as investigation progresses, more and more fully confirmed by the results of archæological research. That from a central point, somewhere in Mesopotamia, the Hamitic branch of the race migrated to the south-west, the Japhetic branch to the north-west, and the Semitic branch 'eastward' toward the 'land of Shinar' is indisputable. As the details of these race movements

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\* *Daily Telegraph*, February 12, 1932.

emerge from obscurity, the meagre account in Genesis x is not discredited; rather, little by little, it is being confirmed.\*

(3) *Monotheism the Primitive Faith*.—It has been too readily assumed and conceded in recent years that there has been an evolutionary development of religion in past ages from Totemism to Polytheism and Polytheism to Monotheism. Much of the critical dislocation of the scriptural records has been based upon this assumption. It was a cardinal principle of Wellhausen's manipulation of the Old Testament. But recent archaeological researches tend to drive us back to the traditional conception that God gave to mankind at the first a revelation of His Unity. In his *Semitic Theology* (p. 11), Dr. Langdon, Professor of Assyriology at Oxford, writes: "Although the South Arábians and Accadians are far advanced beyond the primitive Bedouin stage in the periods when the inscriptions begin, their history shows that it is characteristic of the Semites to use animal names in times of advanced culture, when there is no possible influence of primitive totemism. I therefore reject the totemistic theory absolutely. Early Canaanitish and Hebrew religions are far beyond primitive totemism (if it ever existed among them) in the period when any definite information can be obtained about them . . . all Semitic tribes appear to have started with a single tribal deity whom they regarded as the Divine Creator of his people." Moreover, as a result of his recent excavations at Kish, Dr. Langdon says: "In my opinion, the history of the oldest religion of man is a rapid decline from Monotheism to extreme Polytheism and wide-spread belief in evil spirits. It is in a very true sense the history of the fall of man."

Sufficient, I think, has now been presented to justify the belief that we are passing through a period of revolutionary change of ideas which may reasonably induce the hope of a return to a saner outlook upon the story of the beginnings of mankind, and a more reverent regard for the simple but sublime narratives of the early chapters of Genesis. The "primitive savage" and the early cave-man may quite reasonably be found to have existed contemporaneously with other members of the human race in a condition of culture and civilization. The "primitive savage" may prove to be a degenerate. A strong conclusion worthy of careful consideration, is the opinion of the eminent

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\* *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments*, p. 231.



archæologist, Professor Sayce, which has been endorsed by a leading Canadian scientist, Dr. W. Bell Dawson, F.R.S., in the words: "Neither in Egypt nor in Babylonia has any beginning of civilization been found. As far back as archæology can take us, man is already civilized, building cities and temples, carving hard stone into artistic form, and even employing a system of picture writing; and of Egypt it may be said, the older the country the more perfect it is found to be. The fact is a very remarkable one, in view of modern theories of development, and of the evolution of civilization out of barbarism. Whatever may be the reason, such theories are not borne out by the discoveries of archæology. Instead of the progress we should expect, we find retrogression and decay; where we look for the rude beginnings of art, we find an advanced society and artistic perfection. Is it possible that the Biblical view is right after all, and that civilized man has been civilized from the outset?"\*

## II.—THE GENESIS STORY OF THE FLOOD.

We live in days when scientists are tending towards the abandonment of uniformitarianism. The observed facts in the realm of geology can no longer be reconciled with the doctrine that all things and all forces continue as they were from the beginning. The catastrophic as opposed to the uniformitarian theory of geological transformation has been stoutly maintained by scientists of such eminence as Sir Henry Howorth, Sir J. William Dawson and Professor George F. Wright, of Oberlin, who concludes his article on the subject in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopædia* with the statement: "If we disbelieve in the Bible Deluge it is not because we know too much Geology but too little." It is, however, in the realm of Archæology that the Genesis story of the Flood has been most remarkably vindicated, and that within the past ten years, and from two distinct sources.

The first of these is the quite recent discovery of a chronological prism, catalogued W.B. 444, part of a series of cuneiform tablets purchased in Baghdad by Mr. H. Weld-Blundell for the Ashmolean Museum. The Professor of Assyriology at Oxford, Dr. Stephen Langdon, who was the field director of the expedition which discovered the tablets, writes in his preface to the

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\* *The Bible confirmed by Science*, p. 151.

*Oxford Edition of Cuneiform Texts* concerning W.B. 444: "It constitutes the most important historical document of its kind ever recovered among cuneiform records."

This tablet contains a record of early Babylonian and Sumerian history, written in the reign of King Sinmagir about 2000 B.C. It purports to contain a complete list of Babylonian kings from the beginning of time. Incidentally, as it were, it refers to the Deluge as making a break in the chronological table. It consists of eight columns of cuneiform writing containing 379 lines. It is a plain, unvarnished catalogue of kings and dynasties, capital cities and dynastic changes. The tablet begins thus:

- Line (1) Rulership which from heaven descended
- (2) At Eridu rulership began
- (3) At Eridu Alulim was king

It continues later in the same strain:

- Line (19) The rulership was established at Larak
- (25) The rulership passed to Sippar

But presently the attention is riveted by the following:

- Line (39) The Deluge came up
- (40) After the Deluge had come
- (41) The rulership which descended from heaven
- (42) At Kish there was rulership

Now note the significance of lines (1) and (41). Line (1) records that at the beginning of human history rulership descended from heaven. Then, after the Deluge, the recommencement of the dynasties is described in similar terms: "The rulership which descended from heaven."

Thus in this very ancient record, going back 4000 years, there is a three-fold confirmation of the Genesis story. First, it speaks specifically of the Deluge as having created a break in the succession of kings and dynasties; second, it confirms what Genesis records, that at the beginning God gave to Adam earthly dominion, and that after the judgment of the Flood, this was restored in Noah; and third, in the statement "the Deluge came up" we can perceive a confirmation of the Biblical record that "the fountains of the great deep were broken up"—the flood being caused not simply by the rain coming down, but also by the waters of the ocean, through some cataclysm occurring in the mighty deep, coming up like a gigantic tidal wave.

This epoch-making discovery by Professor Langdon is paralleled in wonderment by the evidence for the historic Deluge revealed by Dr. Leonard Woolley, in the still more ancient record of the earth itself. Dr. Woolley, as Director of the joint expedition of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania, has been engaged during the past seven years on the site of the city whence Abraham originally migrated, Ur of the Chaldees. In the season of 1928-29 he was digging deep down into the debris of that ancient centre of population, until he reached what appeared at first to be the beginning of everything. He writes: "The shafts went deeper, and suddenly the character of the soil changed. Instead of the stratified pottery and rubbish, we were in perfectly clean clay, uniform throughout, the texture of which showed that it had been laid there by water. . . . The clean clay continued without change until it had attained a thickness of a little over eight feet. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped, and we were once more in layers of rubbish full of stone implements, flint cores from which the implements had been flaked off, and pottery. . . . The great bed of clay marked, if it did not cause, a break in the continuity of history: above it we had the pure Sumerian civilization slowly developing on its own lines; below it there was a mixed culture of which one element was Sumerian and the other of that al-'Ubaid type which seems to have nothing to do with the Sumerians but to belong to the race which inhabited the river-valley before the Sumerians came into it. . . . Inundations are of normal occurrence in Lower Mesopotamia, but no ordinary rising of the rivers would leave behind it anything approaching the bulk of this clay bank; eight feet of sediment imply a very great depth of water, and the flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history. . . . Taking into consideration all the facts, there could be no doubt that the flood of which we had thus found the only possible evidence was the Flood of Sumerian history and legend, the Flood on which is based the story of Noah."\*

Dr. Woolley revealed to the world the magnitude of the significance of his discovery in an article in *The Times* of March 16th, 1929, from which the following has been extracted: "As we went deeper the successive strata showed very little change; the types of pottery were uniform, and everything

\* *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp. 26-29.

seemed to show that civilization had long been consistent, not to say static; no ware and no shape occurred which was not familiar to us from the graves, though there must have been a gap of centuries at least. At last, when we had got to about the level of the outer plain, the workmen announced virgin soil, a clean, water-laid clay without the slightest admixture of pottery or ash or other human debris; the only object that did come from it was a fragment of fossilized animal bone. That there might be no possible mistake we carried our pit deeper, through eight solid feet of clean clay, and then suddenly came on a flat stratum rich in flint chips and cores, pottery like that found above, and painted fragments of that al-'Ubaid ware which I had last summer rashly labelled as antediluvian! Deeper we went and found more pottery, some of it of the types common in the earliest graves, but with this further examples of painted vessels and sherds of a sort hitherto unknown at Ur, and, at the very bottom, a burnt brick also of a type wholly new to us; this last proves that at the time when the painted pottery and the flints were in use, Ur was not merely a village of mud huts, but already a town civilized and properly built. Then, at a few feet above sea-level, real virgin soil, the clean river silt of the island on which the first huts were built. . . . The disaster which thus buried the old settlement and caused a breach in the continuity of civilization can on the face of it be nothing other than the Flood of Sumerian history and legend. The Sumerians regarded the Flood as an historical event marking an epoch in their national annals, and though they romanced about its date, we have no reason to doubt the fact. . . . He would have been an optimist indeed who had hoped to produce material evidence for such an event as the Flood of Sumerian legend, which is also the Flood of the Book of Genesis; but in no other way can I interpret the facts which our excavations here give us."

That this alluvial deposit was widely extended was proved by a remarkably coincident discovery at Kish close to the site of Babylon, some two hundred miles from Ur of the Chaldees. The following report appeared in *The Times* of March 18th, 1929: "Dr. Stephen Langdon, Professor of Assyriology at Oxford and Director of the Oxford Field Museum Expedition to Kish, yesterday gave hitherto unpublished facts about the results of the expedition, which in Professor Langdon's opinion

afford conclusive evidence that the Genesis story of the Deluge is historical. . . . In a letter to *The Times* on January 4th of this year, Professor Langdon referred to the discovery at Kish of a 'stratum E' in which an alluvial layer has been found, a foot thick, running right through Kish as far as the excavations extend. 'In this layer,' said Professor Langdon yesterday, 'there are two precipitations of clay, potsherds, and stranded fish lying perfectly horizontally. They could not have been placed there by the hand of man, and their position in the layer cannot possibly be explained by any other hypothesis than that of a flood over that part of Mesopotamia. . . . When we made these discoveries two months ago we were loth to believe that we had obtained confirmation of the Deluge of Genesis, but there is no doubt about it now.'

### III.—ABRAHAM AND THE PATRIARCHAL RECORDS.

The significance of Abraham in the Biblical revelation is indicated by a brilliant expositor of the nineteenth century, Dr. Alexander MacLaren, of Manchester, who described the call of Abraham as "the most important event in the Old Testament." For it must not be forgotten that the Bible is not simply a collection of historical records and divine commandments. It is first and last the record of the divine redemption of mankind. The whole of its structure, from Genesis to Revelation, is built on that foundation. The first eleven chapters of Genesis are really a kind of preface to the great theme which begins in chap. xii. Abraham is thus the first link in a chain of patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings, stretching across the centuries, culminating in Christ in a divine process of human regeneration. But the tendency of criticism has been to regard Abraham as an extremely shadowy figure. Wellhausen denied his existence, regarding him as merely "the free creation of unconscious art." The late Canon Cheyne used to declare dogmatically that no teacher of youth ought to let it be thought that we knew anything whatever of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Thus in the minds of many, both clergy and laity, there has grown up the notion that the patriarchal narratives need not be treated as sober history; that it is doubtful whether such a person as Abraham ever existed; that if he did he could only have been an uncultured, Bedouin Sheikh, and a nomad from his birth.

Four archaeological discoveries of prime importance have combined to undermine this critical pre-supposition. They are : (i) The discovery of the Code of Hammurabi ; (ii) the confirmation of the historicity of Genesis xiv ; (iii) the revelations concerning the ancient Hittites ; and (iv) the excavations on the site of Ur of the Chaldees.

(1) *The Code of Hammurabi*.—It was in the year 1902—just at the opening of the period covered by this essay—that M. de Morgan discovered amid the ruins of Susa this ancient Code of Laws of Hammurabi, the Semitic founder of the first Babylonian dynasty. His date may roughly be assigned as 2100 B.C. The code of laws which bears his name is very comprehensive, dealing minutely with practically every department of life, even to the punishment of the surgeon who has killed his patient while operating upon him ! So long a time has elapsed since his discovery was made that it is hardly necessary to go into detail. Suffice it to say that it revealed the fact that the art of writing was extensively known 2000 years B.C. ; and second, that a code of laws was then in operation of a character which betokened a high order of civilization. All this was destructive of some of the first principles of the Higher Criticism.

It is easy to lose sight of the fact that the time which separated Abraham from Moses was a period equal to that which separates the Norman Conquest from the accession of Queen Elizabeth. Abraham's acts, therefore, must not be judged by the standard of the Mosaic Law ; for that was not given until half a millennium later. But certain of the patriarch's doings, as recorded in Genesis, are easily explainable in the light of the Babylonian customs revealed in the Code of Hammurabi ; e.g. his acceptance of Hagar at the hands of Sarah, and his culpability in her ultimate ejection from his home. For the Code (law 146) says : " If a man has espoused a votary, and she has given a maid to her husband and she has borne children, afterwards, that maid has made herself equal with her mistress, because she has borne children her mistress shall not sell her for money, she shall put a mark upon her and count her among the maidservants."

(2) *The Confirmation of the Historicity of Gen. xiv*.—The story of the battle of four kings against five, in which Abraham participated, was regarded by many as incredible. Professor Nöldeke, in 1869, published a treatise on "The Unhistorical Character of the Fourteenth Chapter of Genesis." The names of the

kings referred to were unknown outside the Bible. But thanks largely to the researches of Mr. George Smith and Dr. Theophilus Pinches, both of the British Museum, the historical character of the narrative has been substantially confirmed. Competent Assyriologists accept its historicity. Amraphel is Hammurabi. Few kings of the ancient world are now better known. In addition to the Code, about ninety of his letters and other documents have been discovered and translated. The proof of the identification of other names in the narrative is given very conclusively by Sayce in his *Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies* (2nd Edn.), published in 1904.

(3) *The Revelations of the Ancient Hittites.*—The present century has witnessed a great increase in our knowledge of the ancient empire of the Hittites, and the extensive ramifications of this powerful race. It is hard to believe that in the middle of the nineteenth century distinguished Christian scholars denied the very existence of the Hittites. It was in 1839 that the existence of inscriptions at Boghaz-Keui, in Cappadocia, was first revealed, but half a century elapsed before they could be interpreted. In 1907, Dr. Winckler found there several thousands of cuneiform inscriptions in the Hittite language. Word-lists with the meaning in Assyrian also came to light. Ten years later Professor Hrozný, of the University of Prague, gave to the world his decipherment and translation of the Hittite Code of Laws.

We now know that the Hittite empire was both powerful and cultured; frequently at war with Egypt. According to Sayce, the wars between the two empires on the battle-ground of Palestine had so exhausted the country that the way for the Israelitish conquest of Canaan was prepared by the Hittites. The purchase of the cave of Machpelah by Abraham, and the other references to his contact with the Hittite race may thus be regarded as absolutely historical, anticipating as they do, by thousands of years, the discoveries of modern Archæology.

(4) *The Excavations on the site of Ur of the Chaldees.*—For their testimony to the historicity of the patriarchal narrative these have been both illuminating and convincing. For it was while Abraham was a resident in this city that he received his call. Dr. Woolley's investigations have revealed an environment which exactly corresponds. Ur of the Chaldees was a civilized and cultured city, with its schools, libraries, temples and commodious

dwellings. But its principal temple was devoted to the worship of the Moon-god. Doubtless the moral life of the community suffered from the corruption which is inseparable from idolatry. Abraham was divinely summoned to leave the city and become a wanderer. He left Ur and ultimately reached Palestine. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." \* Note the emphasis on "dwelling in tents." A Bedouin sheikh does not require faith to dwell in a tent; but Abraham, being a city-dweller from his birth, did require faith in order to step out from his old associations and former manner of life. But, while a wanderer, he was looking forward to the life of a citizen; for the vision that sustained him was that of a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Such harmony between the Old Testament and the New, with its confirmation by modern Archæology, is a sure indication of the historical character of the narrative.

#### IV.—THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

Next to the judgment of the Flood in the days of Noah the most signal act of divine punishment of the ungodly recorded in the Old Testament is that of the destruction of the Cities of the Plain. Our Divine Lord placed the seal of His imprimatur upon its historical character in words of condemnation of the unbelieving cities which bordered the Sea of Galilee. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matt. xi, 23).

The only written record of this dire event is that which is contained in the Old Testament. The story is brief but graphic and awesome. Smoke, and fire, and sulphur, and salt are the elements which combined in the work of destruction. A scene of complete desolation is presented in the words: "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (Gen. xix, 24, 25). An arresting

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\* *Heb.* xi, 9.



feature in the narrative is thus related : " But Lot's wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt."

Now this is one of the Biblical records the truth of which has been severely challenged. But the story, down to some of its minutest details, has been remarkably corroborated by a scientific expedition which investigated the whole area about ten years ago. The party was a representative one. The President was Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle, a Presbyterian, of the Xenia Theological Seminary, Missouri, U.S.A. It included Dr. Albright, a Methodist, of the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem, and Mr. Makhoul, of the Department of Antiquities, a member of the Greek Catholic Church in Palestine. The leading archaeologist was Père Mallon, a Jesuit priest of Jerusalem; the geologist was Professor Alfred Day, of Beirut College in Syria. Besides several scholarly assistants, the expedition had the advice of Mr. Dinsmore, of Jerusalem, reputed the most expert botanist in Palestine, and the judgment of Père Vincent, the foremost Palestinian scholar in the world.

The results of the expedition may be summarized as follows :

(1) *The Biblical Presentation of a Formerly Populated and Civilized Region is Confirmed.*—The evidence was revealed to Père Mallon in a group of graves at Bab-ed-Dra'a, 500 feet above the Dead Sea. Dr. Kyle writes: "The civilization represented in the Bible story, that of the early Bronze Age, 2500-1800 B.C., the civilization of Abraham and Lot and of Sodom and Gomorrah, was clearly established, by indubitable evidence, to have been on the Plain at that time. The High Place at Bab-ed-Dra'a with its seven pillars together with its adjoining cemetery manifestly for important personages was of this early Canaanite civilization, positively identified as belonging to that period by the pottery from the graves" (*The Deciding Voice of the Monuments*, p. 253).

(2) *The Location of the Cities is thus Indicated.*—"The rising of the Dead Sea since the days of Abraham by reason of the filling in the delta of the Jordan at the north end of the sea, has resulted, especially since the beginning of the Christian era, in the sea running over at the southern edge and flooding the Plain. There, in a few feet of water and mud, the ruined cities hide their shame. The High Place and the Cemetery of their noble dead being upon higher ground is still to be seen" (p. 255).

(3) *The Original Beauty and Fertility of the District*—"like

a garden of the Lord"—is corroborated by Dr. Kyle, who was impressed by its salubrious climate, its excellent water from the red sandstone of Moab, its romantic scenery, and its possibility of becoming one of the finest winter resorts in the world.

(4) *After the Catastrophe a Vast Period of Desolation Ensued.*—"The most careful search of the Plain from one end to the other, with soundings down to virgin sand and gravel, especially at Arabic Zoar, showed that from the end of the Early Bronze Age, about 1800 B.C., on to the end of the Biblical period, in fact till Byzantine times, there was no civilization of any kind on the Plain" (p. 254).

(5) *The Elements of Destruction were undoubtedly such as the Scripture represents.*—In a monograph entitled *Explorations at Sodom*, Dr. Kyle says that "the great catastrophe did take place exactly as narrated in the Bible . . . This region was found by the geologists to be a burned-out region of oil and asphalt, of which material, indeed, there is again an accumulation that will soon be exploited . . . Now wherever these conditions exist there is an accumulation of gases, and the geologists tell us that here, at some time which they cannot exactly fix, these gases were ignited by some means, also to them unknown, and there was a great explosion, with first an upheaval, and then a subsidence of the strata. The character of the ruptured strata has also been determined, with most interesting conclusions. There is along the lower part of this Plain a great stratum of rock-salt, which on the western side of the Plain shows itself in that great salt mountain, now known as Jebel Usdum. At its base is a stratum of rock-salt about one hundred and fifty feet thick. It is almost pure salt, but lies in layers of varying thickness. Mixed with the layers of salt, and falling down over them also, is a marl in which is much free sulphur, lumps of which we picked up along the sea. When the explosion of the gases took place, this stratum of salt mixed with sulphur was ruptured with the other strata, and the salt and sulphur carried up into the heavens red-hot, and so rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah and over the whole region, exactly as the Scripture describes the rain of fire and brimstone from heaven. Mixed with the salt and sulphur was also the asphalt, heated to a high degree" (pp. 127-130). The boiling asphalt would create a dense smoke screen; such as that which is described in the Scriptural narrative in the words: "And Abraham looked

towards Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

(6) *The possibility of such a fate as that which befell Lot's wife* is illustrated by the fact that to this day the mountain peaks of the neighbourhood are incrustated with salt. Thus, in the words of Dr. Kyle, "the geologists have found in nature exactly what the Biblical record describes in Providence."

#### V.—THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO.

The Scriptural narrative of the capture of Jericho seldom fails to provoke the derision of the sceptic. The details of the conquest are certainly extraordinary; but assuming the possibility of Divine intervention in the affairs of mankind, they are far more illuminating than the superficial reader could imagine. Jericho was a walled city apparently impregnable; "shut up" as the narrative describes; but a city which was the door of entrance into the Land of Promise, and therefore one which had to be occupied. A mysterious, angelic visitor appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand! That fact alone suggests that no ordinary event is at hand. Precise instructions are given. The military forces are to march around the city once every day, followed by trumpeters and priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant; with the rest of the people following in the rear. On the seventh day the whole company is to march around seven times; and the promise is given that at the sound of the trumpets, when the people are to shout with a great shout, the wall of the city will fall down "flat." A breach being made, the military are to enter, and the city is to be destroyed.

This Scriptural story has received most remarkable confirmation in an expedition of quite recent date, due to the enterprise of Sir Charles Marston, supported by the late Lord Melchett. The work of exploration was begun in 1930, and has continued in the three succeeding years. Professor John Garstang, of the University of Liverpool, was in charge of the expedition. In a volume entitled *The Foundations of Bible History—Joshua Judges*, he has presented a careful and considered report of the work of excavation.

To illustrate the archæological confirmation in detail of the Bible story, the following points are noteworthy:

(1) *The Size of the City*.—A command to walk around ancient Babylon or Nineveh, even once in a day, might well have provoked sceptical decision. But Jericho was an exceedingly small city, being, according to Professor Garstang, "rather less than 230 yards in length and about 130 yards in width, so that its whole circumference was not more than 650 yards. Its area was thus less than six acres, and the population it contained could hardly have numbered more than 1,500 people"—(p. 131). With a circumference of considerably less than a mile it was thus not difficult for the army of Israel to encompass the city as instructed.

(2) *The Walls of the City*.—According to the A.V., the wall of Jericho fell down "flat." The Hebrew word is *רָצָץ*, which the R.V.M. renders "in its place." A collapse is described of sufficient dimensions to enable the besieging army to enter and capture the city. The recent excavations reveal the fact that Jericho was surrounded by two parallel walls of thirty feet in height—the outer one six feet, the inner one twelve feet in thickness. They were built of sun-dried bricks containing no binding straw. Sir Charles Marston has suggested that "jerry built" is possibly derived from "Jericho built!" Careful examination of the debris has demonstrated that the walls fell outwards. Professor Garstang writes: "The outer wall suffered most, its remains falling down the slope. The inner wall is preserved only where it abuts upon the citadel, or tower, to a height of eighteen feet; elsewhere it is found largely to have fallen, together with the remains of buildings upon it, into the space between the walls which was filled with ruins and debris. Houses alongside the wall are found burned to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within. As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt; the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins into the city" (pp. 145-146).

(3) *The Cause of the Collapse*.—Professor Garstang suggests that the collapse of the walls may have been due to earthquake. He writes: "The collapse of the walls of Jericho is not attributed by the Bible narrative to a physical agency. But we should not overlook in this connexion the possible effect of earthquakes, which in themselves would doubtless have been regarded at the time as direct manifestations of Jehovah's powers. . . . Palestine is subject to earthquakes, some of which have wrought great damage. The havoc caused by the earthquakes of 1927 amounted

to a national disaster. At Nablus, two whole streets of houses completely disappeared, and in all several hundred houses fell, leaving thousands of people homeless. At Amman also the shocks caused much material damage; while at Jericho itself an hotel collapsed with fatal consequences, and the ends of the Allenby bridge over the Jordan were displaced. Jericho lies particularly within the earthquake zone, and on that occasion violent shocks were recorded on four days out of seven " (pp. 143-144). " Further investigations at Jericho in the spring of 1931 disclose the possible effects of earthquake shock affecting the northern and southern walls. The eastern wall is entirely destroyed. These observations indicate tremors east and west across the Rift, as was apparently the case in the earthquakes of 1927-28 " (p. 404).

Whether all this may be regarded as evidence of divine intervention each must determine for himself. I personally am convinced that it may. When crossing a bridge, a modern army is always commanded to " break step "; the reason being that the swinging movement of an immense body of men, marching in step, is calculated to weaken the bridge and bring about its downfall. It is surely a reasonable suggestion that the tramp of an immense multitude seven times around the city, with the immense vibration of a great shout, synchronizing with a gigantic earth tremor divinely foreseen, may have combined together to bring about the collapse of the brick walls of Jericho.

(4) *The Date of the Capture.*—Some eighty Egyptian scarabs unearthed, containing the cartouche of the reigning Pharaoh of Egypt, together with an immense quantity of pottery discovered, indicate a date for the capture of Jericho of about 1400 B.C. I shall refer to this later. Suffice it to say here that these discoveries tend to harmonize the narrative with the Scriptural records which both precede and follow.

(5) *The Evidence of Fire.*—In the Biblical story we read (Josh. vi, 17, 21, 24): " And the city shall be devoted, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord." " And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city." " And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein." Sir Charles Marston has said that Professor Garstang was so impressed with the extent of the conflagration and the thickness of the burnt strata enveloping the ruins that he came to the conclusion that Joshua

and his men, after the capture, systematically collected wood and other combustible material from all round the district to make one huge bonfire of the devoted city." (*The New Knowledge about the Old Testament*, p. 114.) To quote the Professor's own words: "Every room in the palace area tells the same tale of walls half fallen, reddened by fire amid layers of white ashes and masses of charcoal, rising through and above the ruins. The store rooms were filled with great pottery vessels ranged in rows, and, though now crushed to fragments and their contents burnt, some of them may be seen to have been filled with grain and other foodstuffs, while some were sealed up and still show the dregs of their once fluid contents."

(6) *The Absence of Metal*.—One striking feature of the excavations is the fact that though abundance of pottery has been collected, so far no vessels of bronze or other metal have been unearthed. This is the more extraordinary in view of the fact that while quantities of burnt wheat, lentils, onions, and other foodstuffs have been discovered, no metal vessels have yet been seen. The omission, however, is fully accounted for when we turn to the Scriptural narrative which contains the plain statement: "And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord." This detail, taken in conjunction with all else that has been revealed, confirms the precise accuracy of the Scriptural record, and justifies the verdict given by Professor Garstang in the words: "Set side by side with the Biblical narrative, the material evidence is seen to bear out in every essential detail the record of the capture and destruction of Jericho by the Israelites under Joshua."

## VI.—THE DATE OF THE EXODUS.

The generally accepted date of the Exodus in critical circles in recent years has been about 1220 B.C. This assumption has been fruitful in considerable dislocation of the Scriptural writings, viewed from the traditional standpoint. One serious result of the assumption is the belief held by some that the great mass of the Israelites never even entered Egypt. Moreover, it has led to considerable confusion and contradiction of the sacred narratives, casting discredit upon the authenticity of the books of the Hexateuch. But one of the bye-products of

the excavations on the site of ancient Jericho has been the discovery of material evidence in support of the traditional date of the Exodus, and one which is in harmony with the chronological data of the First Book of the Kings. There we read in chap. vi, 1: "And it came to pass, in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord."

Now we know with some assurance the date of the accession of Solomon. According to *The Cambridge Ancient History*, it was in 970 B.C.; according to Sir Flinders Petrie 960 B.C. If we divide the interval between these dates we arrive at about 965 B.C. for the time of the foundation of the Temple. The date according to Josephus was 966 B.C. If we accept the latter date as the basis of our calculation, and add 480 years thereto, we arrive at 1446 B.C. as the date of the Exodus; and, allowing a round figure of 40 years for the wilderness wanderings, we get 1406 B.C. as the date of the capture of Jericho.

The recent excavations on the site of Jericho confirm, in remarkable degree, this Biblical chronology. Professor Garstang has been at considerable pains, while investigating the various articles unearthed, to attain to chronological exactitude. "The date of this destruction," he says, "was not ascertained, but certain limits were established. Among the thousands of potsherds characteristic of the period, found among and below the ruins, not one piece of Mykenman ware has been observed. This fact suggests that the fourteenth century had not begun at the time the walls fell. A more precise indication was found outside the city, at the foot of its northern slope, in an undisturbed stratum that overlay the filled-up fosse of the Middle Bronze Age. The destruction of the Canaanite city is well marked by black layers of burnt matter running down from the ruined parapet of the outer wall. In this area, uniquely, a few houses sprang up, outside and upon the disused fortifications, after the destruction of the upper city, in the second half of the Late Bronze Age, to be destroyed in their turn, leaving a second layer of ashes as witness of the fact. Between the two layers of burnt matter, and underlying in particular the latter, there was found in the course of excavation a vase of Mykenman style, the date of which may be assigned with some certainty to about

1300 B.C. It pertains, as the evidence shows, to a partial re-occupation of the northern extremity of the site, outside the former limits of the upper city and above the debris that marks its fall. It follows that the upper city had already been reduced to ruins before that date. The evidence all points, then, towards the year 1400 B.C. for the fall of Jericho " (pp. 146-147).

In the meantime much confirmatory evidence has come to light. More recent excavations have yielded vast hordes of pottery of the middle of the late Bronze Age (1400 B.C.). Especially in the necropolis of the ancient city, where the inhabitants of Jericho through many generations had been interred, valuable chronological witnesses came to light. Among these were some eighty scarabs, inscribed with the royal cartouche of the reigning Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty. "In one was found scarabs bearing the joint names of Queen Hatshepsut and Thotmes III (1501-1487 B.C.) and in another two royal seals of Amenhetep III (1413-1377 B.C.). As these all come to an end with the two royal seals of Amenhetep III, there is evidence, quite independent of the pottery, that the city also ceased to exist during that period. For the two centuries that followed there were no interments, the distinctive pottery and decoration of the time of Akhenaten and Tutankhamen was not represented at all. Thus everything pointed to the reign of Amenhetep III (1413-1377 B.C.) as marking the period when Jericho fell." (Marston: *The New Knowledge*, etc., pp. 96-97.)

## VII.—THE ANTIQUITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

Did the first five books of the Bible originate at the time at which, according to their own testimony, they did originate, or are they the product of an age many centuries later? The *prima facie* testimony of the books themselves gives the impression that they are practically contemporaneous documents of the events related. Such is the traditional belief of the Christian Church. The Higher Criticism of the last half century, however, especially that presentation of it associated with the names of Graf and Wellhausen, is strongly opposed to this traditional belief.

The critical theory has been built up mainly on the following hypothetical supports: (i) the late date of the art of writing; (ii) the gradual evolution of religion from totemism to poly-



theism, and from polytheism to monotheism; (iii) the belief that such a code of laws as that presumably given through Moses could not, by reason of its religious and ethical superiority, have been produced at such an early period; (iv) that the events described during Israel's sojourn in Egypt in the days of Joseph, and the Exodus in the time of Moses, are not historically trustworthy, being the work of later authors who had very little knowledge of Egypt and matters Egyptian; (v) that the ritual observances prescribed in the Book of Leviticus are far too advanced to have been the product of the Mosaic Age, and must be ascribed to a period subsequent to the Babylonian captivity—say a thousand years later than the date of their origin according to the records of the Pentateuch.

Now in refutation of these imaginary hypotheses—for that is what they strictly amount to—we have already considered the evidence which disposes of (i) the alleged late date of the art of writing; and (ii) the gradual evolution of religion from totemism to monotheism. With respect to the remaining three, the evidence towards their refutation that has most recently come to light may be classified under four geographical heads: viz.: (i) The evidence from the site of ancient Jericho; (ii) the evidence from the Temple of Serabit in the Sinaitic desert; (iii) the evidence of the Ras Shamra tablets discovered in Syria; (iv) the evidence from the monumental remains of Ancient Egypt as recently presented by Professor Yahuda.

(1) *The Evidence from the Site of Jericho*.—It has been customary in critical discussions to group together the first six books of the Bible under the name of the Hexateuch. With respect to the historical accuracy of these writings, we have striking testimony from Professor Garstang as a result of his recent researches. Not only Jericho, but also the sites of Ai and Hazor and other places in Palestine, were carefully investigated. And it is with respect to the precise Biblical descriptions of these ancient cities, and the fate that befell them, that Professor Garstang is moved to utter a strong protest against the critical assumption that the records were not contemporaneous, but the product of a time several centuries later than the date of the events related. He says: "In view of the remarkable accuracy and fullness of topographical detail in the earlier portion of the Book of Joshua, and the parallelism of certain passages in the Book of Judges with contemporary Egyptian archives, it is

difficult to believe that these records were not written down in any form until the ninth or eighth century B.C., to which period the early documents, J. and E., are attributed, that is from 300 to 500 years after the events described. . . . It would seem indeed probable that the religious leaders of Israel, soon after their entry into Canaan, adopted the system of writing already well developed in the land, and commenced at any rate a series of sacred archives. . . . Remarkable as may appear the proved historical reliability of the documents upon which is based the world's oldest connected narrative in the history of human and national endeavour, the conclusion we have reached is not altogether astonishing in view of the fact that both the Egyptians and the Hittites, whose influence permeated Canaan at that time, had already established a system of State archives" (pp. 341-342).

(2) *The Evidence from the Temple of Serabit*.—Although not recent, this store of archaeological evidence lies within the prescribed period of this essay. For it was in the year 1905 that the veteran archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie, conducted an expedition in the Sinaitic desert which resulted in the exploration of an ancient shrine called the Temple of Serabit. The temple is situated in the neighbourhood of the famous turquoise mines in which the sovereign rulers of Egypt had from remote centuries been interested; and it is practically certain that the workers in the mines were worshippers in the temple. A remarkable feature that came to light during the exploration was that the mode of worship in Serabit was a form of ritual entirely distinct from that practised in Egypt, but one which largely corresponded to Semitic religious observances. The following are some of the conspicuous points of contrast and agreement:

(i) Serabit is a temple built on a hill. High Places were unknown in Egypt; but we need only recall the scene of Elijah's test sacrifice on Carmel, or the familiar story of Abraham's offering of his son Isaac on the mountainous heights of Moriah, to recognize the correspondence with what obtained in this Sinaitic place of worship.

(ii) Small stone incense altars were found in Serabit. The Egyptians burned incense in a metal shovel; whereas the similarity of Hebrew worship is revealed in the account given in Exod. xxx, 1: "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon."

(iii) Four large lavers or tanks, evidently erected for the purpose

of ablutions, were found—another feature corresponding to the ceremonial washings prescribed in the Tabernacle worship of the Hebrews.

(iv) Immense heaps of ashes which remain testify to the fact that the worship was associated with the offering of burnt sacrifices.

One of the most amazing discoveries was that the men who worked the mines and worshipped in the temple were actually possessed of a system of alphabetical writing. The form of the characters bears a resemblance to the Egyptian hieroglyphics on the one hand, and the later Phœnician and Hebrew scripts on the other. The date of the writing is calculated to be about 1500 B.C. The question naturally arises: who were these worshippers? Sir Flinders Petrie has suggested that they were Hebrews, and that the "three days' journey into the wilderness" in the demand of Moses to Pharaoh, was the common phrase used in Egypt for going down to Sinai. Whether the Hebrews actually worshipped in the shrine of Serabit cannot be certainly demonstrated. But the fact remains that fifteen centuries B.C. a system of worship very similar to that prescribed in the Pentateuch was regularly practised in the Sinaitic temple. Moreover, the presence of alphabetical writing is proof that such a system of religion could have been carefully written down and described in detail as it is in the Books of Moses. This twin fact shakes the very foundation of the Higher Critical contention.

(3) *The Evidence of the Ras Shamra Tablets.*—The testimony from Serabit has been illuminated and confirmed by one of the most recent and one of the most interesting archæological finds in the period under review. Ras Shamra is situated on the coast of Syria, opposite the island of Cyprus. There three years ago, a peasant while ploughing unearthed a tablet containing a cuneiform script. On this discovery being reported further search was made, with the result that a considerable collection of similar tablets was unearthed. The inscriptions are found in an alphabetical language in cuneiform characters, which could not be deciphered at the time of their discovery. But the contents have since been revealed through the co-operation of three distinguished scholars: Hans Bauer, of Halle; Edouard Dhorme, of Jerusalem; and Charles Virolleaud, of Paris. They proved to contain a primitive Semitic dialect resembling Hebrew. The date is about 1400 B.C.

A striking feature of these tablets is the marked resemblance of their contents to the religious ideas and ceremonies in the Mosaic teaching and ritual of the Pentateuch. Some of these may be thus summarized:—

(i) The Name of the Deity is El, with the plural form Elohim. This is the generic name for God throughout the Old Testament. But El, or Elohim, reveals Himself in the Pentateuch as Jehovah or Jah (which may be spelled Yah)—the same name in an abbreviated form. This name Yah is also found in the Ras Shamra inscriptions.

(ii) The Sacrifices. The tablets contain references to the Trespass Offering, the Peace Offering, the Whole Burnt Offering, the First-Fruits, and other familiar ordinances of the Mosaic ritual.

(iii) The Sacred Places. The innermost part of the shrine is called "the holy place of the holy places."

(iv) The Priest in the Ras Shamra ritual is called Kohen, which is the identical name for a Hebrew priest.

(v) The sacred number "seven" occurs quite frequently in the inscriptions.

(vi) The religious ideas correspond.

Now although unearthed in Syria, it has been revealed that these inscriptions reflect a worship and civilization which ultimately proceeded from the far south of Palestine and the district of Sinai. In a very interesting article which he communicated to the *London Daily Telegraph*, which appeared in the issue of November 22nd, 1933, Sir Charles Marston says: "To a young English scholar, Mr. Theodor Gaster, is due the credit of reading the full riddle of the new texts. He has been able to show, on cultural and linguistic grounds, that, though found in the north of Syria, the texts really reflect a civilization which had come thither from the extreme south of Palestine and the district round Sinai. Their marked agreement with the Pentateuch on numerous points of ritual and cult is a remarkable—one might almost say a sensational—vindication of the Hebrew tradition that the Law of Moses was first promulgated in that area."

(4) *The Testimony of Egyptology as recently presented by Professor Yahuda.*—The evidence of the traditional time and place of origin of the Mosaic writings which has proceeded from Scrabit and Ras Shamra has been reinforced quite recently by the philological researches of Dr. A. S. Yahuda, formerly

Professor of Mediæval Hebrew Literature in the University of Madrid. In the early part of 1933 he published the first volume of what may easily prove to be an epoch-making work, *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian*.

The critical view used to be that very little was to be obtained from Egypt and Egyptian for the elucidation of the Old Testament. Professor Yahuda, however, has been deeply impressed with the Egyptian environment which is reflected in the Joseph and Exodus writings. In his preface he says: "After having studied all the languages with which Hebrew had any relation, I came to the conclusion that Egyptian had exerted considerable influence on the formation and development of Hebrew as a literary language." He has accordingly made it his principal aim to establish the Hebrew-Egyptian relationship of the Pentateuch.

The method adopted by the Professor demands a wealth of scholarship, particularly of Hebrew and Egyptian, which is extremely rare, but the principle is simple. It might be thus illustrated. If one thousand years hence a German book should be discovered containing the words cricket, golf, football, printed in German characters as though they were German words, the finder, provided he were well versed in British customs of to-day, would be able to draw certain definite conclusions as to the influence exercised upon the author thereby. Dr. Yahuda finds in these Pentateuchal narratives such an abundance of Egyptian ideas and expressions as to warrant the belief that Egypt was the cradle of Hebrew thought, and that the wealth of detail exhibited could only have been derived from first-hand knowledge and exact observation at close quarters. Three examples may suffice for our present purpose:

(i) The passage in Gen. xli, 40: "According to thy word shall all my people be ruled," used to present great difficulty to commentators, as the literal rendering of the Hebrew is "shall all my people kiss" (כִּסּוּ). The R.V.M. renders "order themselves" or "do homage." Now the context has to do with the distribution of food during the coming years of famine. On comparison with the Egyptian the difficulty disappears. In polite speech the Egyptians always spoke of "kissing" their food. The meaning of Pharaoh's command, therefore, is that in the coming years the feeding of the people shall be regulated by the orders of Joseph the Prime Minister.

(ii) In Gen. xliii, 16 Joseph's steward is called עֹלֵךְ הַבֵּית "he over the house," which was a specific official designation common in Egyptian administration—the title for the administrative officer of a king or dignitary.

(iii) At the beginning of his conversation with Joseph, Pharaoh says (Gen. xli, 15): "I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." The Hebrew word translated "understand" is שָׁמַע, which means "to hear." But this is in entire correspondence with the signification and use of the Egyptian word for "hear."

The above are but a few out of a multitude of examples which illustrate the Egyptian environment of the Pentateuchal narratives, and which has led Professor Yahuda to a conclusion quite at variance with that of the critics. In a lecture given in January, 1933, before the Victoria Institute in London, he said: "It has been my aim to show that the treatment applied to the Bible, regarded as a complex of suspicious documents which can only be trusted when outside evidence is forthcoming, and even then only to such an extent as is in harmony with the tendencies of Higher Criticism, must be abandoned, since every discovery of ancient monuments, and every new find of old records has gone to confirm the Biblical statements." To this may be added the testimony of another equally distinguished Egyptologist, the late Professor Naville, of Geneva, who said in the preface of his book, *Archæology of the Old Testament*: "The new line I have taken has brought me back to the old traditional view about the authorship of several books of Scripture. . . . It is not through any 'dogmatic environment,' but from a sincere conviction based on facts, that I joined the 'contemptible minority' which still believes in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch."

To conclude, the collapse of the Higher Critical theory of the origin of the Pentateuch is imminent. Harold M. Wiener, Wilhelm Möller, Martin Kegel, and Dr. Hertz, Chief Rabbi in London, are among the modern writers who have strongly opposed it. Dr. Albright, Director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, has said that "practically all of the Old Testament scholars of standing in Europe and America held these or similar views until very recently. Now, however, the situation is changing with the greatest rapidity, since the

theory of Wellhausen will not bear the test of archaeological examination."<sup>\*</sup>

#### VIII.—THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

During the past decade there has been witnessed a very decided reaction in the conservative direction in the realm of scholarship in reference to the historicity of the Book of Daniel. This change has been due to the compulsion of archaeology. Previously, in critical circles, the book was regarded as substantially a piece of religious fiction of little historic worth. A very revealing admission, however, appears in the *International Critical Commentary on Daniel*, which was published in 1927. Dr. J. A. Montgomery says in his Introduction (p. 58): "While the majority of philological commentaries and standard articles upon the book now accept the late date for its origin, nevertheless this tendency may not arrogate to itself the whole of scholarship as there still remain excellent modern scholars who vigorously defend the traditional position."

The weakness of the Higher Critical position is due to the concrete facts of archaeology, which can no longer be disregarded, which reveal:

(i) The collapse of the critical argument associated with the names of Greek musical instruments which occur in the text of Daniel. In his scholarly and comprehensive book entitled *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, the Rev. Charles Boutflower illustrates the wealth of Greek influence on the times in which the book was written. Nebuchadnezzar drew Greek mercenaries from Ionia to fill his armies and to cut his medallions and gems. It should not be surprising, therefore, to find the names of Greek musical instruments in the story in Daniel of what occurred in his reign.

(ii) The revelations concerning Belshazzar, whose very existence the critics once denied. In 1929 appeared another weighty volume, from the pen of Dr. Dougherty, entitled *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*. "In this work he places side by side all the material available for arriving at the original date. First comes the Nabonidus Chronicle, next the Cyrus Cylinder, thirdly, the *Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus* in cuneiform, and all three written at the time or soon after the siege of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 B.C. Then comes Herodotus writing about 400 B.C., followed

\* *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, 1932.

by Xenophon about the year 360 B.C., followed by the Græco-Babylonian Berossus, a priest of the temple of Bel, who wrote about 250 B.C. Now if Daniel were written at a later date still, how is it that his narrative is correct in details which the other authors living so much nearer the times ignore? For example, not one of them names Belshazzar. Nor is the historical setting so accurate as that given by the author of Daniel. Whereas, on the other hand, the Book of Daniel by its genuine local accuracy corrects or explains the others. Thus Belshazzar seems to have been the King of Babylonia *de facto*, while his father, Nabonidus, was King of Babylon *de jure*—his father having entrusted to him the 'kingship' (*sarrutam*) at an early stage in his public career. . . . Moreover, through his father's marriage into the house of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar seems to have been able to claim Nebuchadnezzar as his 'grandfather'—a word for which there is no nearer title in Hebrew or Aramaic than 'father'."\*

(iii) The Undesigned Coincidence revealed in the promise made to Daniel as recorded in chap. v, 16: "If thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." Until Sir Henry Rawlinson dug up, in 1849, the first cuneiform tablet containing the name Belshazzar, no one could explain why the *third* position in the kingdom should be included in the reward. Now, with all the light of archaeology available, we understand. Although Belshazzar was the acting king, resident in the capitol, his father was still king *de jure*. Consequently, when bestowing the highest reward in his power he could only make Daniel the third, as he himself was but the second ruler in the kingdom. This is evidence of the highest order or the historic truth of the narrative.

#### IX.—GEZER, GAZA, AND JERUSALEM.

Only brief references can be made to the work of exploration which has proceeded on these sites during the period embraced by this essay.

1. (1) *Gezer*, which lies about seventeen miles south-east of

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\* Vide Rev. A. H. T. Clarke in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, April, 1931.



Jaffa, was, like Jericho, a city of strategic importance; but its inhabitants resisted the Israelitish attempts to drive them out (Judges, i, 29). From 1902 until 1909 excavations were conducted by Mr. R. A. S. Macalister. In his book, *The Philistines* (1913), he illustrates the Canaanite practice of the sacrifice of new-born children, to which there is frequent reference in the Scriptural records. "The whole area of the High Place," he says, "was found to be a cemetery of new-born infants. That these infants were all the victims of sacrifice is suggested by their close association with the High Place, and confirmed by the fact that two at least displayed marks of fire. These infants were deposited in large jars."

(2) *Gaza*.—The work of excavation on the site of old Gaza is at present proceeding under the direction of the veteran archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie. Abraham must have been familiar with the city, which was one of considerable size and importance in his day, being some twenty times as large as ancient Jericho. Old Gaza appears to have been the sea-port whence the Philistines shipped the wheat harvested around Gerar, which was about a dozen miles away. The walls, houses, and palaces of this ancient sea-port now being unearched, together with the highly finished pottery and elaborate gold ornaments which have come to light, confirm the Bible narratives in that they reveal a high state of civilization in that area, going as far back as 2300 B.C.

(3) *Jerusalem*.—The Wall of Ophel, which surrounds the Temple hill, has recently been excavated. The Rev. J. Garrow Duncan, in 1926, found many fragments of inscribed pottery there. He was particularly impressed by the impregnable position of Ophel as the site of the ancient fortress of the Jebusites, upon which Zion, the city of David, was built. "It was bounded on the east and south," he writes, "by the valley of the Kidron, 300 feet deep, and on the west by the Tyropœan valley, of equal depth. It is assailable only on the north . . . so that on every side the walls were protected by deep natural moats in which an engine of war could not be brought to work with effect." In Josh. xv, 63, it is recorded: "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." Again, in 2 Sam. v, 6-7, we read: "And the king and his men went to

Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David." Recent excavation has thus confirmed these Scriptural statements concerning the strength of this ancient citadel.

#### X.—THE NEW TESTAMENT: LANGUAGE AND HISTORY.

Seventy years ago, Dr. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, the famous Cambridge classical scholar, in reference to the much disputed theory of the nature of New Testament Greek, said: "If we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other without any thought of being literary, we should have the greatest possible help for the understanding of the language of the New Testament generally." The present century has witnessed a discovery which exactly satisfies the longings of the learned Bishop, and settles finally the question of the kind of language in which the New Testament was written.

In the year 1900, at Tebtunis, in the Fayûm district of Egypt, a great mass of papyri was discovered. Much of it was found in the cemetery, in which mummies of the sacred crocodiles were rolled in papyrus. Besides the papyri, quantities of broken pottery (called by the Greek name *ostraca*) have been unearthed. Upon these papyri and *ostraca* are inscribed all kinds of public, legal, household, and friendly notes and communications, revealing very vividly the daily life of the people in village, town, and city in the imperial Greek-speaking world. Out of refuse and rubbish heaps have been collected an immense quantity of private letters, receipts for money paid, leases and rent arrangements, tax assessments and proclamations. Most belong to the days of the Roman Empire. Their preservation has been due in part to the dry Egyptian soil, and in part to the indestructible nature of the papyrus and potsherds which contain the inscriptions.

Formerly it was thought that the New Testament was written in a special Greek of its own. It was obviously far removed from the Greek of the classical Attic literature. Neither did it resemble the Atticism—the stilted literary Greek of the period—which was an imitation of the classical Attic. Hence the idea

got abroad that the New Testament was written in a Greek of its own kind—a special vehicle for the conveyance of the Gospel revelation. Now by means of the *ostraca* and papyri of Egyptian rubbish heaps it has been revealed that the New Testament is written in the *Koiné*—the colloquial speech of the people of the Mediterranean world. Problems of interpretation have been solved and much illumination has been cast upon doubtful passages.

Two examples must suffice: (i) The word translated “daily” in the Lord’s Prayer, *ἐπιούσιον* (*epiousion*), is a Greek word which provided a perpetual problem for scholars and commentators. According to Deissmann: “No instance of it occurs in the whole of Greek literature. And, besides, the greatest of the old Bible students, Origen, had expressly asserted that the word did not exist in the Greek language.” But in a house-keeper’s book of papyrus dug up in the Fayûm the words τὰ ἐπιούσια occur, and the meaning is clearly revealed. The expression corresponds with the Latin *diaria* found in a list of household requisites at Pompeii. The word in the Lord’s Prayer was a familiar Greek word in common speech used for the daily allowance of food for soldiers and labourers. In the plural it was used by a lady to head her shopping or household list of the things wanted for the day. (ii) In Matt. vi, 2 occur the words: “They have their reward.” Now it transpires that the Greek word ἀπέχω (*apecho*), translated “reward,” was the technical expression used in giving a receipt. Deissmann, in his *Light from the Ancient East* (p. 111) says: “This technical meaning of ἀπέχω, which must have been known to every Greek-speaking person, down to the meanest labourer, applies well to the stern text about the hypocrites: ‘they have received their reward in full,’ i.e. it is as though they had already given a receipt, and they have absolutely no further claim to reward. This added touch of quiet irony makes the text more life-like and pointed.”

The value of these discoveries lies in the revelation of the fact that New Testament Greek was the language of the middle and lower classes of the people. It was thus the medium of easy and rapid transmission of the message of redemption. “The masses craved for the simple, and the divine revelation of the Gospel demanded a plain garb. . . . This simple book, with its carpenter’s and tent-maker’s language, was a book for all, and

it could resound, unadulterated to humanity in all centuries, the message of the Gospel which had moved men in a small corner of the Mediterranean world. . . ." "Therefore we can put the wonderful history of the Book of Humanity in one sentence: the New Testament has become the Book of the Peoples because it began by being the Book of the Peoples."\*

Turning to the historical data of the New Testament, one long-standing problem has now been finally settled. St. Luke ii, 1-3 is a passage which, not many years ago according to Sir William Ramsay, theological scholars generally regarded as "a tissue of blunders of the most marked and worst kind." Even Dr. A. B. Bruce, one of the most distinguished of Scottish theologians, in his Commentary said: "One could almost wish that verse 2 had been omitted or that there were reason to believe, as has been suggested by several writers, that it is a gloss that has found its way into the text, and that Luke is not responsible for it—so much trouble has it given to commentators."† The problem at the end of the last century was complex. There was no certain knowledge (apart from St. Luke) of any such imperial census having taken place, nor of the practice of such a method of procedure as that described. Moreover, it was known for a fact that Quirinius was Governor of Syria from A.D. 6 to A.D. 9. The problem has been solved, however, by means largely of the discovery and renovation of an ancient monument.

Shortly after the death of Augustus, in A.D. 14, two bronze pillars were erected in Rome in front of his mausoleum, containing a record of the chief incidents of his life. These two pillars have long since disappeared; but fortunately, copies of them were set up at various places outside Italy. One such remains almost intact, at Ancyra (now Angora, the capital of Turkey), and has been known as the Monumentum Ancyranum since it was discovered in 1555. At many points, however, it is defaced, so that its exact meaning is not always clear. Another duplicate was set up in a temple to Augustus at Antioch in Pisidia; and fragments of it were discovered by Lady Ramsay

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\* Deissmann: *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*, pp. 106, 136.

† *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*.

in 1914. Most of them were exceedingly small, and the work of arranging them accurately was interrupted by the intervention of the Turkish authorities. But in 1928 the work was completed by the arrangement of the fragments in slabs of concrete 3 feet high. Supplementing in the most valuable manner the Monumentum Ancyranum, they establish :

(i) The fact of a periodic imperial census. A translation of a part of the Monument reads as follows : " I three times made up the roll of the Senate and in my sixth consulship (28 B.C.) I took a census of the people with M. Agrippa as my colleague. . . . A second time, with consular imperium, I took the census by myself in the consulships of Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius (8 B.C.) in which the number of Roman citizens on the roll was 4,233,000. I took a third census with consular imperium, my son Tiberius Caesar acting as my colleague, in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius (A.D. 14) in which the number of Roman citizens entered on the roll was 4,937,000."<sup>\*</sup>

(ii) That Quirinius was certainly in command in Syria at the time of the census in 8 B.C. Apparently, Sentius Saturninus was the civil Governor, while Quirinius was the commander of the forces in Syria and Cilicia. Sir William Ramsay has proved that it was the Roman custom for a general engaged in frontier war as the direct representative of the Emperor, to rank superior to the ordinary Governor, who carried on his civil duties as usual.

(iii) As to the procedure of the census described, a papyrus now in the British Museum contains an edict of G. Vibius Maximus, governor of Egypt in 104 B.C., in the following words : " The enrolment by household being close at hand, it is necessary to notify all who for any cause soever are outside their homes to return to their domestic hearths, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrolment and continue steadfastly in the husbandry that belougeth to them."

The conclusion which I submit may be drawn from the above is : (i) St. Luke wrote his Gospel about sixty years after the events which he here describes. He wrote, fully aware of the historical fact that Quirinius was Governor of Syria from A.D. 6 to 9. He knew also that during his governorship a taxing census had been taken which had created a revolt among the

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\* E. S. Shuckburgh, *Augustus: The Life and Times of the Founder of the Roman Empire*, p. 394.

Jews. To this he refers in Acts v, 37, when reporting the speech of Gamaliel: "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him"; (ii) St. Luke, therefore, is careful to point out that the census at the birth of Jesus was the one anterior to this. In Ramsay's words: "This passage could only mean that Luke referred to some system of taking the census from time to time, that this system was inaugurated by a decree of the Emperor Augustus, and that Jesus was born in the year of the first census-taking."\*

That 8 B.C. is the actual date of the Nativity has been endorsed by many scholars. Canon Knowling, in a paper read before the Victoria Institute, maintained that this date is now indisputable. According to Tertullian, Jesus was born when Saturninus governed Syria, which was from 9 B.C. to 6 B.C.

The prescribed limits of the essay permit of only a few additional references to recent discovery. (i) The site of Capernaum now appears at last to be fixed in favour of Tell-Hâm, with its ruins of the synagogue. What personally impressed me most when I visited the neighbourhood as a striking fulfilment of prophecy was the complete obliteration of the three cities, Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin, which were condemned by our Lord, and the barrenness of the district which in His lay was the centre of a teeming population.

(ii) Turning to the Acts, Captain Raymond Weill, in 1920, discovered in Jerusalem a Greek inscription which reads: "Theodotus, son of Vetteneos, priest and ruler of a synagogue, son of a ruler of a synagogue, grandson of a ruler of a synagogue, built this synagogue for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the Precepts; and the hospice, and the chambers, and the installations of water, for the use of those from abroad in need thereof." It is conjectured, with some degree of assurance, that this synagogue was "the synagogue of the Libertines" referred to in Acts vi, 9, whose members were so bitterly opposed to the teaching of Stephen. The "Libertines" were almost certainly Jews from abroad who had previously been carried into captivity.

(iii) Additional information about Sergius Paulus (Acts xiii, 7) was discovered by Sir William Ramsay in 1912, who found at Antioch a Latin inscription bearing the name of "the deputy"

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\* *op. cit.*, p. 239.

as "one of the four Commissioners in charge of the Roman streets," with the titles also of "Tribune" and "Quæstor."

(iv) An inscription was found, in 1909, by Mr. W. M. Calder at Baluklaou, south of Lystra, relating the dedication to Jupiter of a statue of Mereury. This illustrates the story of the visit of Paul and Barnabas recorded in Acts xiv, and the devotion of the people of the city to those two divinities.

Concerning Luke's historical trustworthiness, Ramsay writes (p. 89): "I set out to look for truth on the borderland where Greece and Asia meet, and found it here. You may press the words of Luke in a degree far beyond any other historian's, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment, provided always that the critic knows the subject and does not go beyond the limits of science and of justice." And, with respect to the New Testament generally, Deissmann's weighty testimony may fitly bring this review to a close: "The foundations of our historical knowledge of Early Christianity, taken as a whole, seem to me unassailable. Although hidden to those eyes which cannot see into the depths, they lie huge and massive and imperishable in the depth."<sup>\*</sup>

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\* *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*, p. 166.



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